

Commissioner Mrs. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn

Commissioner Mr. John Dalli

July 2011

Dear Mrs. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn and Mr. John Dalli,

The present Framework Program (FP7) under Health Research is focusing on, among other things, major chronic diseases as cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Rheumatic diseases and musculoskeletal disorders are included in the category "other chronic diseases". The consequence of this has been a very low prioritizing of these diseases, and the last couple of years there have been no calls for proposals in this area.

The Belgian EU Presidency Conference on Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases held last year in October concluded that "There is an urgent need to prioritize basic and clinical research regarding the causes, predictors, management and impact of these chronic diseases". The Danish Rheumatism Association strongly supports this.

This can be done by ensuring that rheumatic diseases and musculoskeletal disorders are mentioned explicit as a major chronic disease consistent with cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes in the frame work program to come, FP8, and in the new EU Health Strategy. Furthermore we strongly urge the EU Commission to allocate funds to research in this area.

The facts speak for themselves: Rheumatic diseases cover more than 200 musculoskeletal conditions and affect over 100 million people of all ages across Europe. Rheumatic diseases have a significant impact on people's ability to work whether it is paid employment, work undertaken in the home to support a family and voluntary work. The direct and indirect costs of providing health and social care for just individuals with rheumatoid arthritis in 2007 was 45 billion Euros. Evidence suggests that enabling people with rheumatic diseases to work and including them in the workforce is of significant financial benefit to society.

The Danish Rheumatism Association sincerely hopes that the EU Commission will take these diseases serious, and initiate a much higher priority regarding support to research projects and programs.

Yours sincerely,


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Danish Rheumatism
Association is a private
and independent
organization that supports
arthritis research and
works for better treat-
ment and greater quality
of life for the 700,000
people
in Denmark, living
with a joint, back or
muscle disease.

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